

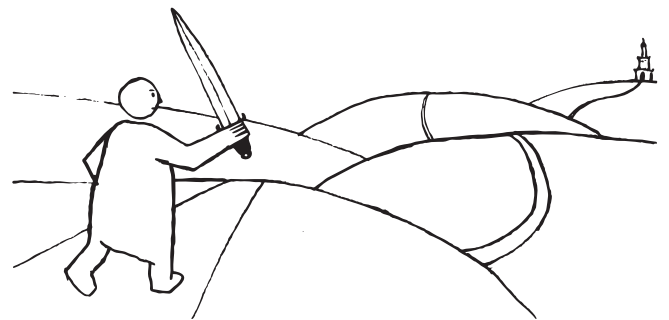
# MAKE IT YOUR STORY

## WRITING

Want to hook the audience and keep their eyes glued to the screen while watching your film? The key isn't tricky camera work or wacky dialogue. It's story. With it, the audience is yours. Without it, they'll get bored and start wondering why popcorn is white.

### IN THIS GUIDE

- \* **THE IDEA**  
You won't get very far without one of these.
- \* **THE HERO**  
How do you take your idea and make it work for a film?
- \* **THE STRUCTURE**  
To be a story, you'll need a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- \* **OUTLINE**  
Get your story out on paper.
- \* **SCRIPT**  
Put your story in a format that everyone can use to make your film happen.

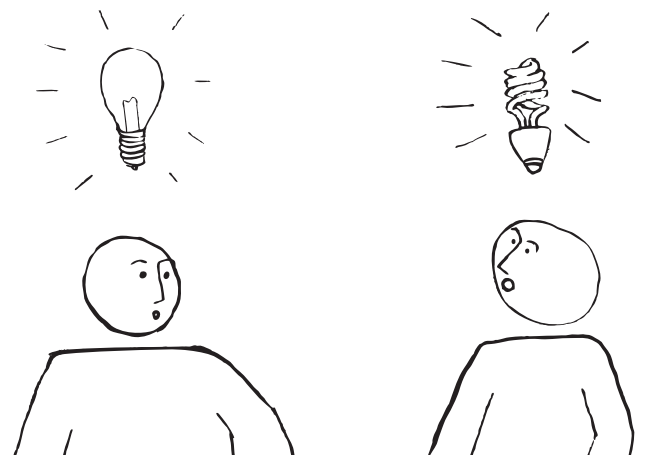


## THE IDEA

To build a story, you need an idea. The best way to come up with ideas is to collaborate. Find some people you get along with and start throwing around ideas. It's your film, it can be whatever you want. You could make a love story set in a bank. Or you could make a zombie sock puppet invasion.

The idea phase is a chance to explore pretty much anything - so don't get negative about any ideas put forward. Let your imaginations run wild for a bit, and let the best idea win, no matter where it comes from.

Eventually you'll need to settle on one idea. It's tempting to try and cram a whole bunch of different ideas in to one film, but it's important to pick one thing and run with that. Your leftover ideas aren't wasted, you can keep those for another film.



## THE HERO

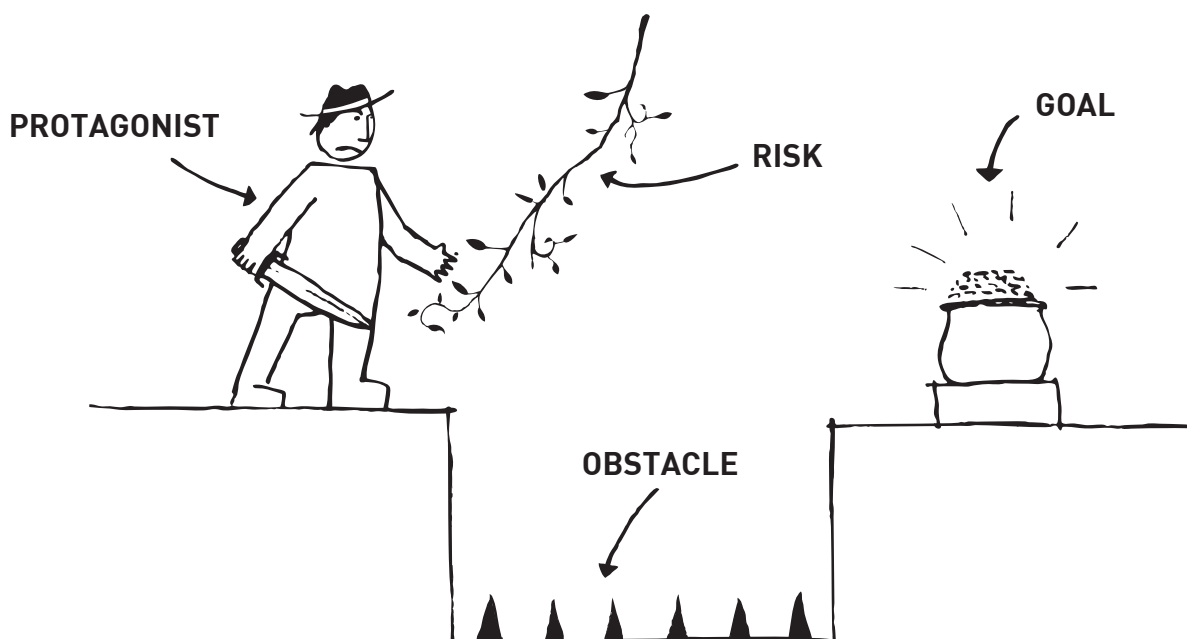
To make a story, you need a hero. We call the main character in a story the protagonist. The protagonist is the one that drives the story forward. Based on your story idea, who is the protagonist? Finding them is the first step. But you haven't got a story yet.

### A PROTAGONIST MUST:

1. have a goal
2. have an obstacle
3. put themselves at risk to achieve the goal

**PROTAGONIST** → THE HERO OR LEAD CHARACTER OF THE STORY

**ANTAGONIST** → THE VILLAIN OR ADVERSARY OF THE HERO



That's how you get an audience engaged. People love to watch characters work to achieve their goals, but it's only exciting if they might fail miserably.

For example, in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Captain Jack Sparrow desperately wants his ship - the *Black Pearl*. Everything he does - whether it's breaking out of prison, stealing another ship, or bargaining with his enemy - is part of an attempt to get it back, and at every point he's putting himself at risk.

But it's not just adventure movies - every story needs a goal, obstacle, and risk. For example, you might have a love story about Jenna and Tom. Jenna wants Tom (goal), but Tom doesn't notice her because she's shy (obstacle). To get Tom's attention, Jenna's going to sing at a school concert, despite never having sung in front of anyone before (risk).

It could be as simple as a dog wanting to get a treat without getting into trouble. Can he reach the biscuit (goal) up on the kitchen bench (obstacle) without his owner seeing him and putting him outside (risk)?



THINK OF YOUR FAVOURITE MOVIE. WHO IS THE PROTAGONIST? WHAT DO THEY WANT? WHAT'S STOPPING THEM?

Now, imagine if we never found out if Luke Skywalker faced Darth Vader, or whether or not Frodo finally managed to cast the One Ring into the fires of Mordor. We'd be pretty annoyed. By the end of your story, the protagonist must succeed or fail. As the storyteller, it's up to you which happens.

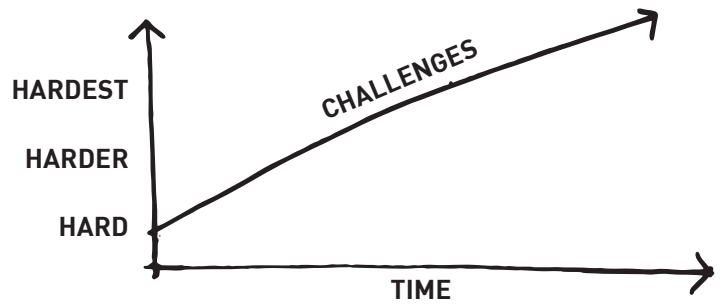
## THE STRUCTURE

Every story needs a beginning, a middle, and an end.

In the beginning, you need to quickly set up your protagonist, their goal, and the obstacle. You'll lose your audience if they don't understand why they're watching your film.

In the middle, your protagonist will put themselves at risk to achieve the goal. But the obstacle will only get bigger, or the risk far worse. That's called **escalation**. You should always make sure things in your story get harder for your characters, not easier.

At the end, your protagonist will either achieve their goal, or fail. How it ends is up to you, but you **must** finish what you started at the beginning of the film. Don't let another



character suddenly enter and save the day. Your protagonist is the one the audience is paying attention to - if you make someone else the hero, you'll just annoy them.

## THE OUTLINE

By now you'll have a protagonist with their goal, and you'll know the beginning, middle and end of your story. Doing an **outline** helps you make sure your whole story is there. You can write this as point form - just list off the things that

happen in your story. Or, you could write it like you would a normal story. It can be as simple or as detailed as you like. The point is just to get your story out on paper, to use as a basis for your script.

## THE SCRIPT

When your outline is finished, one thing remains: the script itself.

The script will be used by everyone else involved in the production as the blueprint for the film. The director will choose the shots based on the scenes and action you write. The actors will play their characters based on your descriptions and choices of dialogue. It can be extremely detailed or quite simple, as long as the story and character is on the page.



When you write your script, you need to think visually. Your audience won't get to see the script, so only write things they'll see in the film. Don't write descriptions about what your characters are thinking, come up with ways of showing what they're thinking. For example, instead of saying a character misses their dog, you can have them look at a picture of their dog and sigh.

On the following page is an outline of a magnificent story. As you read it, see if you can identify the protagonist, the goal, the obstacle, and where the protagonist puts themselves at risk.

WRITING YOUR FILM IN THE ESTABLISHED SCRIPT FORMAT WILL HELP YOU SEE ROUGHLY HOW LONG YOUR FILM WILL BE.

**ONE SCRIPTED PAGE IS APPROXIMATELY ONE MINUTE OF SCREEN TIME.**

USING THIS AS A GUIDE WILL HELP YOU KEEP YOUR FILM TO THE 5 MINUTE LIMIT.

# OUTLINE

Kate grasped the sword, but could not pull it from the stone. "C'mon" she said, pleadingly as another drag-lephant (like a dragon crossed with an elephant) readied to charge at her.

With no where to run, Kate continued to battle with the imprisoned blade but the stubborn sword would not budge. The Drag-lephant charged and Kate made a final attempt at wrenching the sword free, but with the beast mere metres away she held out the palm of her hand.

"Stop!" Kate demanded.

The Drag-lephant dug it's talon crested hooves into the sand and came to a grinding halt. Calmly, Kate said "Look, I would really like to do battle with you but I can't get this sword out of this dumb stone, can we do this another time?"

The beast was stunned, it exhaled smoke and ash from its large nostrils, turned and walked away.

Kate bolted upright in her bed, it was all a dream. Her alarm clock was sounding, it was morning and time to get ready for school.

THE END

HERE'S HOW THAT STORY LOOKS AS A PROPERLY FORMATTED FILM SCRIPT.



## SUMMARY



Story is the most important element of filmmaking. You should now have all the tools you need to get started building your own.

1. BRAINSTORM AN IDEA
2. PICK A PROTAGONIST
3. GIVE THEM A GOAL AND OBSTACLE
4. PUT THEM AT RISK
5. FORM A BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END
6. PUT YOUR STORY TOGETHER IN AN OUTLINE
7. WRITE YOUR SCRIPT

## MAKE IT

This is just one of five MAKE IT guides available on the MyState Student Film Festival website. All of the MAKE IT resources are completely free for you to download and share.

[www.mystatefilmfestival.com.au](http://www.mystatefilmfestival.com.au)



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If you have any questions about filmmaking, head over to our Facebook page to get them answered by the same filmmakers that wrote this guide.

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This is a guide only. Care and adult supervision should be exercised at all times when using film making equipment.